United Nations

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General welcomes General Peace Agreement signed yesterday in Rome by the President of Mozambique and the leader of Mozambique National Resistence Movement; says he will present to Security Council plans of central and large role for United Nations in Agreement's implementation.

+ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, tells UNHCR Executive Committee today that Agency is increasingly being forced to work in conditions of "insecurity and anarchy" as more and more humanitarian emergencies erupt in midst of armed conflict.

+ Security Council holds consultations this afternoon on Secretary-General's report on situation in Croatia.

+ Anti-apartheid Committee supports call by Goldstone Commission for urgent criminal investigation of those responsible in Ciskey massacre on 7 September.

+ In continuing debate, General Assembly is addressed by President of Kazakhstan; Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lao; Foreign Ministers of Myanmar, Libya, Dominica and Ethiopia; Chairmen of Delegations of Grenada and Antigua and Barbuda; on Friday evening, the Assembly heard Foreign Ministers of Guinea, Liberia and Sao Tome and Principe.

+ Secretary-General signs agreement on establishment of United Nations Interim Office in Kazakhstan.

+ Racism and discrimination are among the most "virulent, dangerous and insidious scourges of mankind", Antoine Blanca, Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights, tells General Assembly's Third Committee.

+ The General Committee recommends that General Assembly include additional item, "Emergency assistance to Pakistan", in its agenda for current session.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has welcomed the General Peace Agreement signed yesterday in Rome by President Chissano of Mozambique and Afonso Dhlakama, the leader of Mozambique National Resistence Movement (RENAMO).

In a statement issued by his Spokesman today, the Secretary-General said the willingness of the two parties to put aside their animosities of the past and "work for peace in their war-ravaged country" was a most encouraging development. The General Peace Agreement envisaged a central and large role for the United Nations in its implementation, the statement said. The matter would be brought before the Security Council at the earliest possible date so that the United Nations would be in position to carry out the extremely important responsibilities assigned to it by the Agreement, it said.

The Secretary-General called upon the parties to exercise maximum restraint in the period before the General Peace Agreement would come into force. He added that the United Nations' role would require greater effort and more resources than was the case in Angola, but the international community recognized that these were sound investments.

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The United Nations High Commissioner's Office for Refugees (UNHCR) was being forced to work under conditions of insecurity and anarchy, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sadako Ogata.

Speaking to the 46 member States of the UNHCR's Executive Committee in Geneva today, Mrs. Ogata said the rapid succession of crises this year had generated demands and expectations on the Agency on an ever-increasing scale. UNHCR had had to provide protection and assistance to the displaced and distressed, she said, and, on occasion, the Agency had had to turn to the military for logistical support. This had given new dimension both to the humanitarian operations and to the role of the military in the post-Cold War era, Mrs. Ogata said.

One and a half million refugees returned home voluntarily this year, most to Afghanistan, Cambodia, Angola, Vietnam and Laos. But at the same time, "a staggering 3 million people have been forced to flee their homes", with the result that the UNHCR was now responsible for the lives and well-being of more than 18 million refugees, she said.

Mrs. Ogata also noted that "refugee flows had become increasingly bound up with the ethnic, cultural and religious fault lines cut through many of the world's States". The industrialized world had been forcefully reminded this past year that refugees were not a marginal phenomenon of a distant Third World", she said. Europe, with 2.6 million displaced persons, had again become the major theatre for refugee movements. Human misery deserved the same

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attention wherever it occured, she said, but "clearly did not receive it always", Mrs. Ogata pledged to increase her Agency's efforts to ensure that the silent refugee situations were not lost in oblivion.

In a separate development, UNHCR has announced the resumption of the United Nations humanitarian airlift to Sarajevo on Saturday, 3 October, with planes from the United States and possibly other nations. Some of the 18 other nations which have participated in the airlift have also indicated that they are considering rejoining the operation as soon as possible, the Agency said.

The airlift, which began on 3 July, is operated by UNHCR and the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR). It was suspended on 3 September, when an Italian cargo plan was shot down by a missile as it approached Sarajevo, killing all four crew. At its peak, the airlift carried 220 tons of food a day to the 450,000 people in the besieged city and its surroundings.

In other news from the region, for the second time in four days, unarmed UNPROFOR helicopters appeared to have been fired upon yesterday near Zagreb, according to a press release issued in Geneva.

In a letter to the Vice President of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, UNPROFOR Director of Civil Affairs Cedric Thornberry has asked for an indication as to which steps the Government was taking "to preclude any further such occurrences".

In addition, in a letter to the Chief of Staff of Croatian forces, General Philippe Morillon, Acting Force Commander of UNPROFOR, had complained of "the apparent lack of weapons control in the Croatian Army.

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The Security Council held consultations this afternoon on the report of the Secretary-General, issued last week, regarding the Prevlaka Peninsula and general situation in Croatia. According to a United Nations official, a draft resolution had already been prepared by Council members, but it was not known whether they would meet following consultations in order to adopt it.

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The Special Committee against Apartheid has supported a call for an urgent investigation by the South African authorities in order to identify and bring to justice those found responsible for the incident on 7 September, in which 28 participants in a political demonstration at Bisho were killed by Ciskey soldiers. The call was put forward in a report by the Commission of Inquiry regarding the Prevention of Public Violence and Intimidation, chaired by Justice Richard Goldstone, who described the massacre as "morally and legally indefensible".

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In a statement issued on Friday, 2 October, following the agreements earlier last week between South African President F.W. de Klerk and President of the African National Congress (ANC), Nelson Mandela, Committee Chairman Ibrahim A. Gambari of Nigeria said a climate allowing for free political activities throughout South Africa was a crucial element for the political process of change to go forward in that country. The Committee concurred with President de Klerk's acknowledgement after the Ciskey massacre that it was not possible to negotiate constitutional issues before the question of violence had been dealt with satisfactorily.

The Special Committee reaffirmed its support for continuation of the process of peaceful change through negotiations towards a non-racial and democratic South Africa. It also emphasized that the South African authorities had the primary responsibility of government to control and prevent violence, and to safeguard the lives and security of all inhabitants in all of South Africa.

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Addressing the General Assembly for the first time since becoming a Member of the United Nations, the President of Kazakhstan, Noursultan A. Nazarbaev, proposed this morning that countries give 1 per cent of their defence budgets to the Organization's peace-making efforts and further increase this allocation annually by 1 percent of military defence expenditures as a contribution to the cause of peace. Kazakhstan was ready to be the first one to make such a contribution for the benefit of peace, he said.

Turning to concerns about peace and security in Asia and Eurasia and his country's initiative in holding a Conference on Interaction and Confidence in Asia, Mr. Nazarbaev said the peoples of his region need to mount collective search for the best ways of adapting to the future challenges of the integrated world. He called for the convening of a special session or United Nations Conference to "discuss the problems of the post-confrontational epoch".

The Minister also spoke about the "fragile pattern" of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) established late last year, saying the processes of transition to free-market economies and democracy in the CIS had been accompanied by growing socio-economic and political instability, the sharpening of present conflicts and the generation of new ones. He proposed the formation of a United Nations Regional Centre or Committee on preventive diplomacy in Central Asia, saying that while the area does "not form a continuous instability zone,..."the ideas of early detection of conflicts and preventive diplomacy could find the most practical direct implementation there".

The Permanent Representative of Grenada to the United Nations, Eugene Pursoo, told the Assembly this morning that a number of small Island States in the Caribbean, highly dependent on the banana industry, were faced with an uncaring call by certain countries to have bananas placed under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) framework. Noting that such a campaign

could wipe out the banana industry in the islands, the Permanent Representative stressed that the resulting social hardships and political instability were costs which would be ruinous to those countries' societies. He reiterated his appeal for flexibility on the banana issue and called on the pro-tarrif lobby to relax their efforts.

On the problem of illicit drug trafficking and money-laundering, the Foreign Minister stressed that no country was able to combat this scourge single-handedly. He appealed for increased support at the multilateral level to institute comprehensive measures aimed at demand-reduction, interdiction, rehabilitation of victims and the appropriate punishment for the couriers of this particular form of death and destruction.

Phoun Sipaseuth, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, said this morning that in South-East Asia, despite certain areas of instability, the situation as a whole was moving towards peace, stability, cooperation and development. His country had signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation with neighbouring countries, had become a party to the 1976 Bali Treaty, and an observer in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), he indicated.

With regard to the question of Cambodia, Mr. Sipaseuth urged respect for and total implementation of the Paris Agreements which were necessary if the aspirations and interests of the Cambodian people were to be met.

He went on to call for coordinated action by all countries in the fight against drugs. Lao had cooperated in the area of integrated rural developments, particularly with neighbouring countries and international agencies such as the United Nations Drug Control Programme, he said.

Lionel Hurst, the Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations, thid morning called on the Organization to be aware of the special disabilities that were inherent to small island developing countries, and urged the Organization to respond in a manner which appropriately reflected those circumstances. The Antiguan Representative also applauded the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) for its funding of a number of beneficial projects in the Caribbean region, but pointed out that UNDP's use of per capita GNP for determining the development status and funding eligibility of small island States worked as a distortion.

Underdevelopment posed a threat to cherished human values, he said, pointing out that island nations and other small countries must look increasingly to the multi-lateral institutions for varied assistance in finding solutions to vexing problems. The United Nations system could not reduce its economic and social development role without adversely affecting prevailing material conditions, he said. His country's investment capital had to be imported, a situation which put it at the the mercy of the major capital markets, because of its small size, he said.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the delegation of Myanmar, U Ohn Gyaw, this morning told the Assembly of his concern at the

critics which, he said, "have unjustifiably portrayed Myanmar as a land where gross violations of human rights have been perpetrated".

Although Myanmar dissociated itself from the decision taken at the recent session of the Human Rights Commission, it would be receiving the Special Rapporteur appointed by the Commission in deference to the United Nations as well as to demonstrate its cooperation, he said. Myanmar had on 24 August acceded to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, thus affirming its international commitment to humanitarian principles, he indicated.

Turning to the problem of narcotic drugs, he said that Myanmar had in June taken a significant step by signing a sub-regional cooperative agreement with China and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP). A similar agreement was also signed with Thailand and the UNDCP. These agreements were aimed at eliminating opium poppy cultivation and reducing trafficking in narcotic drugs and chemicals, used in the refining of heroin in the Myanmar-China and Myanmar-Thai borders areas. Talks had also been initiated with Laos on bilateral cooperation in the field of drug abuse control, and Myanmar was willing to initiate discussions with India and Bangladesh, with a view to setting up similar cooperative arrangements, he added.

The unjust sanctions imposed on Libya had caused its people human and material losses and damages, Ibrahim Muhammad Al-Bishari, Secretary of the People's Committee of the People's Bureau for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, said this afternoon before the General Assembly. The economic losses resulting from the air embargo amounted to over $2 million as a result of the fall in revenues generated by exports of fruits and vegetables, in addition to a 44 per cent decline in non-oil revenues, he said.

Libya had met all the requirments provided for in Security Council resolution 731 (1992) related to terrorism -- which it fully condemned -- and it was willing to provide for "a fair and unbiased trial for the suspects" in the Lockerbie case. Regrettably, Mr. Al-Bishari went on, at a time when Libya was expecting the Council to lift or reduce the unjust sanctions and was calling on the Secretary-General to send an international committee to verify that it had complied with all the requirements, the concerned parties had once again prevented the Secretary-General from responding to that request and sought to get the Security Council to adopt a new resolution extending the sanctions for four more months.

Mr. Al-Bishari reiterated his call for a peaceful settlement to this situation, a settlement, he said, that would safeguard the rights of all, maintain the principles of international law and save the world from escalation and confrontation.

On the situation in the Middle East, the Foreign Minister urged the international community to translate its support of the Palestinian people into practical measures "by pushing for an immediate stop to Jewish immigration to Palestine and the occupied Arab lands, halting the construction

of Israeli settlements, providing protection for the Palestinian people and implementing all resolutions relevant to the Palestinian question and that of the other occupied Arab territories", so that peace and justice might prevail in all parts of the Middle East.

Speaking on environmental issues in the General Assembly this afternoon, the Minister of External Affairs of Dominica, Brian Alleyne, said it was the responsibility of the industrialized countries to "contribute to the progress of developing countries in a compensatory manner", saying they must compensate for the damage to the environment and for the injustice done to them.

The industrialized countries had gained economic prosperity in disregard of the destruction of the environment, he said, while the developing countries were belatedly seeking to raise their standards of living through an industrialization process patterned on the model of developed countries. Such a quest, he said, would no doubt take its toll on the environment.

The Minister also stressed the sovereign right of a country to use its natural resources for its own economic development, while respecting the environment and bearing the needs of future generations in mind. "Small countries, no less than large ones, had the right to pursue their national interests free from the bullying threats of special interest groups", he said.

Mr. Alleyne also joined other Caribbean leaders in condemning the "violence and illegal interruption of the democratic process in our sister island" Haiti, which had led to the continual violations of human rights, increased poverty, economic degradation and the fleeing of thousands from their homeland. The refugee crisis was a cause for grave concern he said, urging all Member States to support the decision contained in the resolutions of the Organization of American States (OAS) concerning the restoration of democracy in that country and to participate in their effective implementation.

Seyoum Mesfin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia, recalled this afternoon that a Horn of Africa Summit had been convened in Addis Abeba in April 1992 in order to examine the serious humanitarian crisis in the sub-region and work with regional organizations and the United Nations.

At the end of the Summit, he exolained, a Declaration -- A Framework of Cooperation and Action Programme -- was issued. Most significantly, the Summit decided to establish a High Level Standing Committee of the Horn of Africa on Somalia to coordinate on-going efforts to bring about a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The effort by the countries of the Horn of Africa was a practical manifestation of the principle that regional conflicts should, as much as possible, be resolved by the countries of the areas concerned. However, he went on, the efforts underway by the Horn of Africa governments, the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and others to bring about lasting peace in Somalia should henceforth be pursued in a coordinate manner.

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Turning to the Eritrean question, Mr.Mesfin said it had also been resolved by the recognition of the right to self-determination of the Eritrean question. He announced that a referendum would be held next year in the presence of international observers, including the United Nations to determine definitively the future status of Eritrea.

The Ethiopean Foreign Minister further pointed out that the establishment of democracy in his country, whose economy was devastated by war and natural calamities, was an "extremely arduous undertaking". This is not a sign of dispair, he said, but an acknowledgement of a concrete reality which is a necessary first step to success in any undertaking.

On Friday evening, Ibrahima Sylla, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Guinea, noted that in his country, there were today more than 600,000 Liberian refugees, of whom two-thirds were children, who had fled the civil war that was destroying their country. Alleviating their suffering would require increased assistance, in addition to the considerable aid already provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Turning to internal issues, the Foreign Minister stressed that the transition to democracy in his country was proceeding peacefully. The constitutional institutions were being established and some 40 parties were involved in the political process. A Supreme Court ensured the regularity of the elections. The Governement was following a policy of transition based on dialogue and transparency, he said.

Mr. Sylla also said that economic revitalization and diversification in Africa must involve regional and subregional integration. The creation of the African Economic Community would allow the continent to profit from the complementarity of its human, natural and financial resources, he said.

Gabriel Baccus Matthews, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Interim Government of National Unity of the Republic of Liberia, told the Assembly Friday evening that the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) had recently decided that, unless the National Patriotic Front of Liberia led by Charles Taylor complied with the Community's peace programme, the Community would impose sanctions against the areas controlled by the Front.

Mr. Matthews also said that the Community would also seek the assistance of the Security Council to make the sanctions "effective and binding on all members of the international community". His Government expected that the Council would support that decision, he said.

The international community needed to understand and appreciate the valuables which tended to make peace elusive in Liberia, he noted, adding that the Liberian crisis had been planned abroad and many of the insurgents trained outside the country. He also asserted that those who had initially provided the training, arms and finances had tried to explain their motives, "couched in spurious arguments of revolutionary duty, to their oppressed African brothers", and pointed out that it appeared that the insurgents were still receiving the cooperation and support of some "brotherly" peoples.

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"The nations of the third world would never be in a position to meet the development challenge until fairer and more appropriate mechanisms were introduced to alter the terms of their participation in world markets", said Albertino Braganca, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sao Tome and Principe, in his statement before the Assembly Friday evening. Development would not be possible without a change in the terms of the unequal exchange which had condemned the huge efforts of many peoples to the caprices of the free market, he indicated.

Mr. Braganca assured the Assembly that his country was prepared to meet the challenge. Political forces had turned to the establishment of a democratic State and a process was taking place which involved dialogue, tolerance, consensus and respect for the diversity of viewpoints in Sao Tome and Principe, he said. However, major financial constraints and a drop in the standard of living could pose a threat to his country's "neophyte democratic regime", he said, adding that the democratization of developing countries would never be more than a utopian dream if they were not backed by a new international vision, which was open to a realistic resolution of the problem of debt, a favourable change in the terms of trade and a gradual transfer of technology.

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An Agreement for the establishment of a new United Nations Interim Office in Kazakhstan was signed at Headquarters this morning by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and President Nursultan A. Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan.

The agreement follows the Secretay-General's decision to establish United Nations Interim Offices, with information and development components, in six countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. These unified offices of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan represent a new initiative on the part of the Secretary-General for closer cooperation between the Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the field.

The first of the Interim Offices was opened in Minsk, Belarus, on 8 September, and agreements to establish similar offices in Armenia and Azerbaijan were signed on 17 September and 1 October, respectively.

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Racism and discrimination constituted one of the most "virulent, dangerous and insidious scourges of mankind", Antoine Blanca, Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights, told the General Assembly's Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) in an introductory statement today.

Speaking as the Committee began consideration of questions of racism and racial discrimination and the right of peoples to self-determination, Mr.

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Blanca said that all the competent bodies of the United Nations in the field of human rights had recognized the necessity for a third decade to combat racism and racial discrimination.

The representative of the United Kingdom, speaking on behalf of the European Community, described what was taking place in the former Yugoslavia as "racial persecution and discrimination of the worst possible sort". The Community condemned the practice of "ethnic cleansing" and was devoting considerable efforts to prevent such policies from taking place, he said.

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The General Committee this morning recommended that the General Assembly include an additional item, "Emergency assistance to Pakistan", in its agenda for the current session. The Committee proposed that the item be considered directly in the plenary.

The request to include the item was made in a letter to the Secretary-General from the Pakistani Permanent Representative to the United Nations in which he said that during the second week of September, unprecedented rainfall had occurred in the northern areas of Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Thousands of villages were inundated, and floods and landslides had swept away many bridges, roads, railway tracks and the telecommunications network. According to preliminary estimates 1,022 persons were dead or missing; 176,117 houses were damaged or destroyed; 6 million people had been displaced; and 122,000 livestock were lost.

The representative of the Philippines said his Government would soon submit a request that an additional item on "Emergency assistance to the Philippines" be added to the agenda.

Also this morning, the General Committee recommended that the Assembly include another item in the agenda, "Programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991", on the basis of a note by the Secretary-General. It was recommended that the item be allocated to the Fifth (Administrative and Budgetary) Committee.

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